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THE WILDERNESS CAMPAIGN

By

VIVIAN MINOR FLEMING

FREDERICKSBURG, VA

1932

W. C. Hill Printing Company

Staunton, Va.

V. M. FLEMING

303 HANOVER ST

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Mr M. A. Roberts
Division of ...
Washing...

Dear Sir - Yrs of the ...
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1922
W. C. Hill Printing Company
Richmond, Va.

V. M. FLEMING
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FREDERICKSBURG, VA., Jany 7th 1925

Mr M. A. Roberts
Division of Accession
Washington D.C.

Dear Sir - Yrs of the 5th Jany 1925, just to hand requesting my wife Mrs Vivian Miller Fleming to send you her Wilderness Campaign - My wife has not been handling the military side of Fredy. She and my daughter have been [illegible] Fredericksburg Shrine and otherwise writing the civil
I was the author
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THE WILDERNESS CAMPAIGN

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GIFT
AUTHOR
JAN 9 '25

FOREWORD.

This account of the Battle of the Wilderness was prepared with extreme care and diligent work, and I think it is an accurate description of the movements of the two armies.

The article was compiled from official reports, and general orders, as to actual occurrences, and taken largely from historical accounts of Northern as well as Southern historians.

The dates of attack, and in many instances the hours of the day, are all embraced in this account.

I, myself, was in the entire Campaign of the Wilderness and many instances here related came under my own observation.

VIVIAN M. FLEMING,

Author.

The Wilderness Campaign.

First Day of May, 1864.—The curtain falls upon Meade's campaign as Commander-in-Chief of the Army of the Potomac, and General Grant, transferred from the Western Army, is installed in his place. This was regarded as a trial of strength of the Federal forces, which were constantly augmented by large accessions to its Divisions and Corps. New levies, made by draft, to fill up the depleted ranks, and the great resources of the Government stretched to its uttermost limit for material with which to supply every need of this immense army. This officer, General U. S. Grant, had won considerable reputation for his military skill in the West. He was commissioned as Lieutenant-General by President Lincoln and made Commander-in-Chief of all the armies of the United States, at this time estimated at one million men. Grant accepted this trust, and turned over to Major-General Sherman the command of the Western Army. He proceeded to Culpeper and took personal charge of the Army of the Potomac.

The Spring Campaign was preceded in February by two movements of the Federal Army. One, the advance of General B. F. Butler up the peninsular to Chickahominy, threatening for a short time Richmond. His hopes, however, were dispelled by a few local troops around Richmond. The other, an expedition of General Kilpatrick, with a body of cavalry from Rapidan to Richmond. The object of this movement was to release and arm the Federal prisoners in Richmond. This completely failed like Butler's expedition. Kilpatrick, when attacked, rapidly retreated, and that part of his command, under Dahlgren, was pursued and attacked, and a large portion killed, including Colonel Dahlgren himself.

It is hoped, for humanity's sake, that Dahlgren's designs

were different from what were indicated by papers found on his body after death, which set forth the purpose of his mission. These papers contained minute instructions concerning the release of the prisoners in Libby Prison and other prison barracks in Richmond, and giving up the city to them as well as the putting to death of President Davis and his Cabinet. Grant now assumes the direction of the Army under very favorable circumstances. This new commander enters upon this great struggle under very different conditions from other commanders of the Federal Army. Personally and politically General Grant was acceptable to President Lincoln and received his hearty co-operation. All power was placed in his hands and the best troops of the Federal Army were added to his command. He had now under him an army of veterans, and the army opposed to him had lost strength month by month. It seemed, under such conditions, he should have crushed his enemy in a few months.

The Federal Army, ready for duty May 1, 1864, numbered one hundred and forty-one thousand and sixty men. Lee confronted this force with fifty thousand, his force being little over one-third of Grant's. The accessions to Grant's army between the 1st and 4th of May still increased the odds against Lee's command. From a glance, at this discrepancy, one could readily see the conception of the Federal Government was inspired with the purpose of extermination, confronted as it was by an army one-third its size, with an inadequate supply of both food and ammunition.

Longstreet's Corps at this time had reached Gordonsville from its Chickamauga Campaign in Tennessee. Grant had been urged by many of his advisors to move his army to the James and thus encompass Richmond within a radius of twenty miles, but he steadfastly declined upon the ground that Lee's army first of all was his objective, and the siege of Richmond without the elimination of Lee's army first would amount to nothing. While the conception of such a plan was

good, the failure of its purpose entailed a big toll of losses, including killed and wounded. Lee's army, as some Northern writer puts it, is an army of veterans sharpened to a perfect edge. What if you did turn its flank, it amounted to nothing, all that could be said or considered from an effective standpoint was the loss of life. With an army, trained as the Southern Army, defeat in a day or battle decided nothing in itself. Grant seemed to understand this, and hence his purpose of extermination, for he coldly calculated that he could better endure the loss of ten men than could Lee one.

The Federal Commander hesitated between two plans, one to effect a crossing of the Rapidan below Lee, by rapid movement on his right flank, the other above and moving by his left. This last was abandoned by reason of the difficulty of keeping open communication with any base of supplies. It is proper to keep in mind that this design of General Grant, Lee completely reversed, by moving in front of him every step which he took in advance. The Federal Commander, being foiled in every way to gain the mastery of Lee by strategy, was compelled to adopt a plan that did not enter his mind, except as a last resort. So on the 4th of May Grant began crossing the Rapidan at Germana and other fords above Chancellorsville and by May the 5th his entire army was over. The ease and facility with which he crossed the Rapidan with no molestation was quite a surprise to him, and regarded by himself as a great success. Lee made no movement to dispute his passage across the stream; he preferred to take the measure of his adversary's strength and attack his flank as Grant's column passed across his front. The idea obtained among the Federal commanders was that Lee intended falling back to the North Anna river and there take up his line of defense. Lee's movements, however, were very different. Instead of retiring before the Federal forces in the direction of Richmond he moved with three army corps towards the Wilderness, to offer battle.

The head of the Confederate column consisted of Ewell's corps, which retained its position on the Rapidan. This corps formed the right of Lee's line. A. P. Hill, who had been stationed higher up in the vicinity of Liberty Mills, followed, and Longstreet, who was near Gordonsville, brought up the rear. This disposition of the three army crops named was dictated by the conditions for the ensuing struggle. Ewell advanced in front down the old turnpike, running east and west nearest, and along the Rapidan. Hill came over the Orange Plank road, parallel to and south of the old turnpike, thus forming on Ewell's right, who, as stated, was moving down that road, and Longstreet, following, came in on the right of Hill.

Grant had plunged his army in the dense wilderness, which had been the scene of Hooker's discomfiture the year before. His army, followed by a wagon train of four thousand wagons, indicated the preparations for a permanent campaign. These had reached the Wilderness Tavern and the Brock road, over which Jackson had made that "Secret Flank Movement," a year before (May, 1863) on Hooker's right wing.

In order to have a proper understanding of this great Battle of the Wilderness, keep well in mind that nothing surprised Grant more than the sudden appearance of Lee in this dense thicket and under-brush. He misinterpreted Lee entirely, for he did have a general knowledge of the condition of Lee's army, as well as its vast numerical inferiority to his own. A natural construction of Lee's movements would place his column on a rapid retreat towards Richmond, but instead, like an apparition, he appeared in this dark wilderness, and ready to attack the vast host of his adversary. The last thing that suggested itself to Grant's mind was that Lee was not only confronting him, but preparing to bring on an attack. Having this offensive movement in mind, Lee moved with his usual celerity and energy.

As soon as Grant broke camp north of the Rapidan, Lee was apprised of the fact and at once ordered his three army corps in motion in the direction of Chancellorsville. Those doing now, whose memories go back across nearly three score years, will recall the amazing promptness and expert movement of Lee's three army corps. May 3d, the camp of the Confederates was the scene of noise and movement—bands were playing, nothing disturbed their enjoyment. Morning of the 4th of May, all was changed, camps broken up and silence held away—no sound of revelry anywhere. The troops were twenty miles away and ready for battle. General Lee was in the saddle and his very presence inspired his men as the column pushed forward.

Ewell moved with great rapidity and camped that night in the face of the enemy, and it was the sudden presence of these troops that surprised Grant, as he was moving in the direction of Spotsylvania Court House. He must have been greatly chagrined by this sudden and unexpected movement of Lee. It was not Grant's purpose to fight in the wilderness and this almost impenetrable jungle, and yet so completely outgeneraled was he by his adversary, whose strength was one third of his own, that his entire plan had been reversed, and he was forced to fight on ground of his enemy's choosing. To do this he had to form a line of battle for that purpose. General Sedgwick formed on his right; General Warren and Bernside his center, and Hancock on his left, near the Brock road.

The Federal line, thus formed, ran northwest to southeast, and the right wing was in advance, nearest Lee. The first collision occurred at that point about midday May 5th, and the attack was brought on by General Warren, who attacked Ewell's column on the old turnpike. An obstinate engagement ensued and the division which received the attack was forced back. It rebounded at once—being reinforced—renewed the attack against Warren, and after a hard fight drove him back, with a loss of three thousand men and two pieces of artillery.

* Mr. Lady of Phila., with another when the first Collision of the Battle of the Wilderness took place which he said had never been mounted in any [illegible] he had read before.

This first collision of the Armies on Lee's left was followed immediately by a most bloody struggle on the center. This part of the line was held by A. P. Hill, who had marched down the Plank road and near the intersection of that road with the Brock road (a very important point), when he was suddenly attacked by the enemy. This was likewise a desperate struggle, which resulted, as the other attacks, when the enemy was driven back.

The 6th of May came, and at dawn the two adversaries confronted each other as by common consent, they both being prepared for action. The battle which followed is well nigh indescribable. While nearly one-half of Grant's army thus vainly strives to break through Hill's corps, Lee sends swift messages to Ewell to move forward and capture the Wilderness Tavern Ridge road and thus cut Grant off from the Rapidan. Ewell starts; sends two brigades against the center of Sedgwick's corps, but Sedgwick had fortified himself behind a barricade of logs, and Ewell holds back his men. From Hill's center a counter charge is made by Heath, which resulted in the capture of Rickett's battery, but the guns are lost again. Hill's right is pushed by Wilcox around Hancock's left and two Federal brigades are routed. Hancock makes repeated and desperate attacks, but Hill's line is unyielding, while the Confederate cavalry drives back Sheridan's advance column. A heavy tribute of blood has Lee exacted of Grant, and as the shadows of night deepened into darkness a temporary quiet followed.

Lee sends dispatch to Richmond. "All is yet well, by the blessing of God we maintained our position, against every effort, until night, when the contest closed." Longstreet had only made a twelve mile advance during the entire day. At 8 P. M. Lee sends courier to order Longstreet to make a night march, promising Hill at the same time that his men should be relieved at early dawn, and he sends Ewell orders to make an early attack on May 7th with the left wing of the Confederate

Army. Lee seeks rest upon the bare ground among his weary men. His plans are laid to push Ewell, Longstreet, and Anderson's divisions of Hill's corps in a strong offensive battle against both flanks of Grant's army. The soldiers sleep on ground where they have fought; they had little food; they took little care to strengthen their breastworks, for Longstreet's men were under orders to make a rapid march and take Hill's position. An hour after midnight Longstreet breaks camp and follows a special guide towards the battle front.

At early dawn Ewell opens fire along the Confederate left wing. Lee again takes up the part of the aggressor. Warren and Sedgwick reply to Ewell, and then from left to right along the entire line of the Confederates the battle begins. During the night Burnside crossed the Rapidan with twenty thousand men, and Grant ordered his entire army to make assault along the whole line at five in the morning. Hancock leads one-half of the Federal army against Lee's right and Burnside moves forward to pierce the center. Lee had planned for Longstreet's arrival before dawn to relieve Hill, and his delay had thrown the new attack of Hancock's on Hill's front, his soldiers already weary with long continued fighting. Hill's center stood until Wadsworth's fresh division struck his left flank; then Hancock's struck his right, and the Confederate line, from their continued assaults, was driven back. Desperately Hill's men held and contended the field. So Longstreet's tardiness caused the giving away of Lee's right wing.

Hill's men had been forced back upon Poague's battalion of artillery, that stood as a bulwark in the way of the Federal advance, and Hancock dares not pass Poague's grape and canister. Just behind these guns is Lee on horseback, saying more than once, "Why don't Longstreet come?" From the Confederate left wing comes the heavy sound of battle.

Ewell had stemmed his log works with cannon and heaped disaster upon Warren and Sedgwick. At last Lee's counter stroke upon Hancock is prepared. In closed ranks and double

column, advancing rapidly down the Plank road, rushes Longstreet, at last! Field's division on the left, side by side with Kershaw's on the right. The thunder of Poague's guns shakes the very earth. Lee rides forward to meet the head of Field's division. "What boys are these?" he asks. "Texas boys!" is the quick reply from the brigade that once followed Hood, but now led by Gregg. "My Texas boys you must charge." The Confederates go wild at the sight of this gray-haired, gray-bearded man; their voices grow hoarse with joy at the sight of Robert E. Lee!

The line of battle is at once formed. They advance beyond the batteries against Hancock. Immediately behind the line rides Lee to direct the charge in person. "CHARGE BOYS!" Lee's deep thrilling call as he advances into the thickest of the fight. His men at once divine his desperate purpose and they exclaim as with one accord, "Go back, General Lee!" Lee rides onward, waving his old gray hat, when the cry rent the very heaven—"Lee to the rear! Lee to the rear!" A tall, lank, rugged Texas sergeant moves from the ranks, catches the bridle rein and turns Traveler's head to the rear. A look of disappointment flashed over the face of Lee, but he felt that patriotism demanded for the good of the cause that he should not risk himself. At the head of this column dash the Texans. They were the heroes of First Cold Harbor, Second Manassas, Sharpsburg and Round Top.

At the very head of the Federal Army, massed in the Plank road, the brigade flings itself. The Federal fire is ceaselessly pouring into their front and flanks. As one writer says, "To the right of them, to the left of them, in front of them, muskets and cannon volley and thunder, but into the jaws of death charge the eight hundred."

Benning and Anderson, with their Georgians, and Law, his Alabamians, crash forward against the encircling host. The forest rings with yells, and the roar of battle becomes fearful; half the Texas brigade falls in ten minutes. But the tide of the

Federal tunicae has been formed back. Lee's counter-stroke is continued; three guns are moved forward on the highway. Field deploys to the left, Kershaw to the right of the road. The conflict sweeps in and fro in the tangled brush and under-growth. The crisis of the "Battle of the Wilderness" has come. Anderson gives impetus to Lee's attack; Hill's men return to the front.

10 A. M.—Four brigades of Longstreet, under Mahone, move on right flank. The cut of an unfinished railroad gives them cover that brings them against the left of Hancock's command. With tremendous impetus they fall upon his flank and rear and roll up his regiments; to express it in Hancock's words, "Like a wet blanket." 11 A. M.—Lee pushes his entire force against Hancock's front and flank with an unseen impetus. His command is forced back and broken in fragments, and Wadsworth's division, on Hancock's right, is thrown in great confusion and disorder. 12 M. Sails Grant's entire left wing routed and disorganized; their men scattered in every direction in utter confusion. As General Francis Walker said, "Everything had gone to pieces." Longstreet, now like a tiger thoroughly aroused, is closing in upon Grant's disorganized host. Longstreet's men, ablaze with the spirit of ardour and victory, are passing onward. This gallant soldier puts himself at the head of Kershaw's division and places it across the Plank road. In his hot pursuit of Hancock he lost sight of the fact that his four flanking brigades halted in line facing the Plank road, upon which Longstreet is moving. They mistake him for a Federal officer and a full volley fire upon the General and his staff; thus enacting the same mistake as made by Jackson's men just twelve months before. In this volley Longstreet was wounded and Jenkins killed.

General Jenkins was from South Carolina, and was probably the youngest Brigadier in the Army of Northern Virginia. The Confederate advance, checked by this casualty and another terrible sort of the evening, was averted by the fall of

Longstreet. Lee hastens to straighten out this line of battle. At four o'clock the order to charge is given, through flame and smoke, upon the Brock road. Burnside, before this, had created a stir against the Confederate center, but Hill had already quieted the firing of this Ninth corps.

Ewell sends Early and Gordon to encompass Sedgwick's right flank at the very time he presses his right wing against Hancock's three lines of defense. The forest fire has reached the front line of the Federal logs; onward rush the divisions of Field and Anderson. They open with heavy musketry fire, but Hancock's second line is defended by heavy field pieces, which sweep the field. Up to the very breastworks on Hancock's line the Confederates rush. A gap is made and the Federal line crumbles and turns in flight. The Confederate flag is triumphantly placed on Hancock's first line of defense, but his second and third are impregnable. The Federal artillery compel the Confederates to loosen their grip on Hancock's fortress.

The sun is setting and Gordon is ready for the charge against Grant's extreme right. The Confederate brigades beyond the turnpike are facing south and directly along Grant's line of battle. They advance at the well-known sound, in the distance, of the "Rebel Yell." Sedgwick's right is engaged in constructing a log fortification, but the men lay down their axes and tools and join their Brigadier as prisoners of war. The second brigade is likewise broken and a second Brigadier is captured. When Jenkins falls Gordon is in possession of a mile of Grant's rifle pits and six hundred prisoners, including Generals Shaler and Seymour. In this dense thicket Gordon's men find themselves in a state of confusion, so he halts. The Federal Sixth corps is drawing back beyond the danger zone to a line of defense, just established along the Germana road. Grant writes, "Had there been day light the enemy would have injured us seriously." This fearful struggle, in brush and tangled wood, had closed with Lee, pressing

Grant's right and left and he making desperate efforts to get away. Grant had evidently lost his first conception of making Lee's Army his objective. When asked why he did not move his army in an encompassing circle around Richmond, which he could have done without the loss of a man, by way of the James and York rivers, his reply was, that Lee's Army, first of all, was his main purpose; not one moment conceiving that Lee had the ability to get him in that interminable thicket in the wilderness and keeping him there at a most tremendous toll of human life. But he did learn a very dearly bought lesson, and he was vastly more anxious to make Richmond his objective, and let Lee's Army alone, but Lee did not permit him to gratify that wish, but held him with a grip that Grant never considered possible with the tremendous odds of three to one.

As the second day comes to a close the Army of the Potomac was struggling in partly a defensive state, and only enabled to hold its line behind three heavy walls of log construction, and also drawn its right wing behind freshly constructed intrenchments. So in that attitude Grant is held. His defensive position, however, is so strong that Lee did not deem it wise to attack. If success or failure, determined by the loss of men, the advantage certainly rested with Lee, as the official estimate of these few days put Grant's loss at 17,000 men, while Lee's was one half that number.

May 7th dawns bright and clear and Grant ordered Meade to make a night's march to Spotsylvania Court House; Hancock was to hold his position, while Warren led the Fifth corps along the Brock road southward and Sedgwick moved in the direction of Chancellorsville. Two Federal corps drew back in front of Lee, while two remained. Grant and Meade were anxious for fear of an attack from the Confederate Army. So a new plan developed in Grant's mind next day, which resulted in a despatch to Washington—"Official"—"My efforts will be to form a junction with General Butler as soon as possible

and be prepared to meet any interposing enemy." The translation of which was to get out of the Wilderness as soon as possible, and form a junction with Butler on the James, before Lee could interpose any army to intercept this movement. "My exact route to the James river I have not determined." He might further state, any route to get out of this entanglement and to get away from Lee's Army, which he felicitated himself would be an easy object. Before moving on Richmond, Grant had enough of Lee's Army, and this very dispatch was really that he had been entirely outgeneraled, by an army one-third the size of his own, and wanted to get away from it as soon as possible; so he now turns to Butler, on the James, as his final hope.

May 7th—Lee ordered a road cut south of the Plank road, for he anticipated Grant's movements, and while Grant was felicitating himself that his "*Coupe d' Etat*" on Spotsylvania Court House was a very brilliant move on the war map, Lee understood it fully and sent Anderson's command, of Longstreet's corps, to move along this new road to Spotsylvania Court House. Anderson's movement began at 11 P. M., 7th of May, by this short line. The Confederates moved rapidly, and one hour before dawn found the Confederates within a mile of Spotsylvania Court House, while Grant thought that he had entirely fooled Lee in this movement and that his army was marching in the direction of Richmond.

Lee's swift movement during the night enabled him to form his line of battle across the road on which Grant's troops were marching. This corps held the Court House road and Grant's advance failed to dislodge them. The trend of both army movements were now southeastward, across the swamp and bogs, created by the sluggish streams of the Po and Ny rivers. Lee's quicker marching enabled him to throw his line of battle across the route Grant was moving, with guns facing northward against the Federal column. Grant, being ignorant

of this fact and delayed by Ewell's corps at Todd's Tavern, enabled Lee to concentrate his entire army at Spotsylvania.

AT 4 A. M., May the 5th, Lee arrived with Ewell's corps, after crossing the Rapidan, and at sunset the First and Second corps were thrown across the Brock road, ready to receive Sedgwick's assault. At night comes on the Second Federal corps was repulsed and Ewell counter charged on the right of the road.

During the night the Confederates began throwing up intrenchments in front of Sedgwick's breastworks. The works thus constructed were weak and ineffectual, and Lee thought the position untenable, but Ewell called his attention to a high point on the line defended by Johnston's salient. From that point the enemy's artillery could sweep that section of the country between the rivers. To close this risk Lee, therefore, ordered heavy guns behind the defenses to cover his salient.

Behind Todd's Tavern Hancock's corps lingers during the night of May 5th. "By a study of the line we could see that Early and Hampton held the tail of the serpent, while Anderson and Ewell were hammering on head." May the 6th, early in the morning, Grant dispatched Sheridan on a raid in the direction of Richmond, and this gave Lee time to concentrate at Spotsylvania Court House. On this same day the head of Early's column reached the Court House just in time to drive back Burnside across the N's. The latter seemed without any definite plan and had marched out of the way on the Fredericksburg road to strike Lee's right and rear. Early planted his guns on the north and south along the road, which was continued upon Burnside. The left wing of the Third Army corps was so extended as to unite with Ewell's right, thus creating the great salient. The western side was held by Ewell, and the eastern by part of Ewell's corps and Early. Lee's right wing formed almost a right angle with his center and left. At this angle the Confederate line was pushed out due north one mile long and one-half mile in width. The

soldiers called this "The Mule Shoe" (Horse Shoe by some). By observation, it required three times the men to man both sides of this "shoe" and the apex as it would, had the line been so contracted as to subtend the opening of the "shoe," which General Lee finally adopted, but not until he had sustained pretty heavy losses on both sides and at the bend of this salient.

Hancock followed the Brock road, on May 9th, to take the position on Grant's extreme right. He sent three divisions across the Po to attack Lee's left and rear. Grant sought to attack Lee's "Mule Shoe" from the north and the two sides, east and west. Under the cover of night Lee made ready a counter stroke across the Po, below the Court House. He moved Hill's division at early dawn of May 10th. Hill fell upon the flank and rear force of Hancock's men just as Hancock was proceeding to carry into execution Grant's order to withdraw his men to the northern side of the Po. Grant seemed very nervous and timorous in his movements, for he had seen enough of Lee to know that he was reckoning with a very different soldier from those he confronted in Tennessee. So Grant at once recalled Hancock's column, in order to concentrate in front of the Confederate intrenchments.

Amid a dense pine thicket Heath made a vigorous attack upon Barlow's Federal division, in which Barlow lost many men—killed and wounded. Through the burning woods—a perfect "inferno"—he hastened Hancock's retreat across the Po, capturing one of his big guns.

May 10th.—Grant storms the Confederate works. At 11 A. M. a strong force assails Lee's left wing. Field's divisions clothed their defense with a constant flare of musketry and artillery fire and the Federal soldiers poured out their blood in unstinted quantity and without avail.

The Federals made a second attack about 3 P. M. against the Confederate First corps and their second failure equalled their first. This repulse was very signal and absolute; so

much so that, after the defeat of the Federals, the Confederates leaped over the fortifications to gather up and collect the muskets and ammunition of the Federal dead and wounded. These were distributed along the line of the Confederates, till every Confederate soldier was armed with a loaded Federal musket and ammunition. About sundown Hancock was united with Warren, and these two forces formed a long and heavy line and dashed themselves against Lee's thin line at the point on his left wing. Hancock's front line went down before the rapid fire of Field's division, but onward bravely dashed the Second Federal line over the breastworks of the Texas brigade. Like tigers fought the remnant of the brave "eight hundred" with clubbed muskets. The adjoining brigades were turned against the flank of the foe and their assault proves fruitless.

At the same hour another assault was raging against the western face of the "Mule Shoe." Sedgwick sent Upton's brigade to charge Lowell's center. This combination of force broke through Doles's brigade and swept him from the Confederate works. Battle and Johnson assailed him in front, and still they gallantly continued to struggle. Gordon and Walker's blows upon the Federal flanks forced Upton back with heavy losses.

Several lines of Burnside's corps tried to seize and blockade the road to the Court House, but Confederate artillery under Cutts and Pegram splendidly removed this Federal impediment. This day of Federal sacrifice was followed by a day of rain. May 10th, Grant wires thus to Halleck: "Send to Belle Plain all the infantry you can rake and scrape." May 11th, he despatches to Washington the well-known boast, "We will fight it out on this line if it takes all summer." May 11th, Lee observed extraordinary commotion among the Federal troops. Burnside turns the head of his column across the Ny and marches back to the Court House. Higher up the Po marches another Federal brigade. Hancock then withdrew a

division from the Federal right. Lee construed this commotion as a withdrawal from the field. He ordered all his artillery on the Confederate line to be withdrawn and held in readiness for a march (thus dismantling the "Mule Shoe" salient). In obedience to this command, Longstreet commanded the guns from the salient named. Johnson's division was left to guard the apex with nothing but infantry and two pieces of artillery. At midnight Johnson reported a massing of the enemy and asked for a return of the guns that had been removed. Through the heavy mist of the morning of the 12th of May Hancock's corps rushed forward and enveloped the salient (Mule Shoe). Johnson's division was very alert, but infantry alone could not drive back the masses of the Second corps. Besides the dampness had affected the muskets of the infantry and the guns failed to fire.

The Confederate force was about 2,800, commanded by Edward Johnson, better known as "Alleghany" Johnson on account of the reputation he won in western Virginia. This 2,800 men were made captives. Other Confederate batteries rushed forward to the salient, but not in time. Before they could unlimber for action they too were made captives. Twenty cannon, in all, and Generals Johnson and Stewart fell into Hancock's hands. This was the only feat of any consequence made by Grant in this campaign. Across the opening of this "Mule Shoe" Gordon ran his line, thus shortening the Confederate line of defense and saving men by this movement—making one man on the opening of the salient equal to three around it.

Lee spurred his horse to the battle front and found Gordon's men ready for a charge. Lee quietly took his position at the head of Gordon's column. "This is no place for General Lee," said Gordon. The soldiers heard what Gordon said and began to shout "Lee to the rear!" These men, General Lee, are Georgians and Virginians and have never failed you."

"And they won't fall now," cried Gordon. A sagged soldier from the ranks ran up to Travelin's head, caught the bridle-rein and turned the horse's head and again the cry went up "Lee to the rear!"

Gordon then moved in the direction of Hancock's men and the din of battle began when Gordon met Hancock, in the dense growth of pines. The Federal left was driven back and Gordon planted the Confederate flag on the eastern face of the salient. Ewell pushed Ramseur's brigade against Hancock's right flank; from Early's corps came two brigades, commanded by Harris and McGowan. Lee again rode forward to lead Harris's Mississippians into the deadly breach, but again the pushed arose, "Lee to the rear!" Harris's men repulsed Hancock's right wing; Hancock sustains heavy losses and was driven out of the salient entirely, except the outer trenches of the apex of the "Mule Shoe." Mississippians under Harris held the place of honor in this conflict. Three Confederate brigades the corresponding inner trenches of this "Mule Shoe."

So for twenty hours across this pile of logs the more-dense conflict continued hand to hand, until the place was saturated with human blood, and received the name as the "Bloody Angle," and will be known to the students of history for all coming ages as the spot where American chivalry sealed with their blood the principles of patriotism as they saw it.

On May 17th, not very welcome news came to Grant, Halleck telegraphs as follows: "Sigel is in full retreat on Strasburg. He will do nothing but some more did anything else." Sigel had suffered defeat at the hands of J. C. Breckenridge with the loss of six Federal guns and nine hundred men. Sigel's force numbered six thousand and Breckenridge four thousand.

The corps of cadets from V. M. I.—mere boys, some of them only twelve years old, advanced with the steadiness of

veterans, side by side, with the Sixty-Second Virginia regiment and captured a blazing battery from the center of Sigel's line. "Battle of New Market."

Information also reached Grant that Butler was bottled up on the James river and could not move—like being inside a bottle, with the James and the Appomattox rivers, and Beauregard held the cork of the bottle, so Butler could neither go back or come forward.

On May 18 Grant massed two army corps, the Second and Sixth, and sent them to storm the salient. Lee, having contracted his line to the opening of the salient, could more effectually hold that short line; his heavy guns were along this new base line. Shrapnel, case and canister from twenty-nine guns broke the Federal host of twelve thousand before they got within infantry range. At this time Burnside fell back from his attack on Lee's right wing.

The Federal Army was slowly moving towards its own left; seemingly concentrating on that wing. Grant was seeking a weak link in Lee's chain, testing the whole line, but in every assault was driven back. May 19th.—Ewell went around the Federal right to ascertain their position. In this movement he was assaulted by a large force and lost nine hundred of his men, killed, wounded and missing. But this engagement held Grant back a day from his march southward.

Hancock was leading Grant's advance southeast on May 20th, in the direction of the R., F. & P. R. R. To this time the casualty of the Federal loss in Spotsylvania, in wounded, killed and captured, was eighteen thousand, and the total losses of the Army of the Potomac from Rapidan to Spotsylvania were estimated at over thirty-seven thousand; a third of that number was the estimated loss of the Confederate Army. May 21st.—Ewell led the advance of Lee's Army towards Hanover Junction beyond the North Anna river. The fore-

noon of May 22nd the head of the column reached the Junction. At noon the same day Anderson crossed the North Anna, while on May 23d, the Third corps, under Hill, was on the south side of the stream. Lee did not have the strength to strike Grant's flank. He preferred a shorter way to block his southward march.

Breckenridge and Pickett, whose forces totaled nine thousand, awaited Lee's arrival at Hanover Junction. May 23d.—The army of Lee were behind rude intrenchments, running northward, awaiting Grant's approaches. the center of the line, commanding the Telegraph road, was Longstreet's old corps behind heavy field pieces. Right of this center was the Second corps—"Old Stonewall"—and to the left the Third Army corps, A. P. Hill. Further up the stream Warren's corps crossed the river and threatened the Confederate left. Hill sent Wilcox, at six P. M., to drive Warren back, but Warren's force was pretty strong, so there was no attack made. When darkness came both sides began to fortify.

Early on the 24th Lee inspected his left wing and was thoroughly aroused with anger when he observed the progress Warren had made and with flashing eye and great indignation his words of rebuke fell upon General Hill. "Why did you let those people cross the river? Why did you not drive them back, as General Jackson would have done?" Hill's movement had disarranged Lee's entire line; since he had drawn back his left Lee had to retire his right from the river, permitting his center to rest at Ox Ford on the North Anna, held by the First corps. Noting this change we can see that Lee's Army was drawn up like a wedge, the apex against the river.

Grant pushed two corps across the river to face southward, while Hancock's corps crossed above and faced northward. Burnside attempted to cross at the center, but Lee's guns on

this apex exacted a big loss in his corps. Grant thought better of this movement on the night of the 26th, for when May 27th dawned the whole Federal camp was vacated and Grant had recrossed the river. Lee was greatly disappointed that he did not visit disaster upon Grant, with his two wings separated on the south side of the river. But nothing counted, his relentless spirit never wavered. So Lee started on the last lap of this wonderful defensive, and directly southward, between the Central and R., F. & P. R. R., he pushed the Second corps, now commanded by Early. The First corps moved around Lee's, via Ashland. This was a march of twenty-four miles in thirty hours, and placed the Confederates in line of battle, facing north-eastward on a ridge between Totopotomy and Beaver Dam creek.

Grant kept close to the bank on the northern side of the Pamunky and tried to cross the stream and take Richmond. This movement on the part of Grant was retarded by General Fitz Lee 'till Lee's whole army was thrown athwart Grant's route. On May 28th Grant moved his whole army south of the Pamunky, but Lee's formidable front brought the Federal Army to a halt, so Grant paused to await reinforcements from Butler.

May 30th.—W. F. Smith's corps reached the White House and marched to strengthen Grant's left wing. "(Lee's continued sickness during this most important epoch interfered with his movements considerably.)" From Beauregard, south of Richmond, Lee asked for reinforcements. This request was not very acceptable to Beauregard, because of Beauregard's disappointment in not having a previous plan of his carried out by the administration. He suggested earlier in the campaign that Lee should fall back from Spotsylvania to the Chickahominy and draw Grant's line after him. As Beauregard suggested, only a part of Lee's line held to retard the move-

ment of Grant, while the balance of his army should form a junction with his, and by a combination of those two forces encompass Butler, capture him and move northward and stand with the united strength of these two forces against Grant. This was impractical, for Lee's Army, reduced by a sufficient force to aid Beauregard in capturing Butler, would have been an easy prey to Grant, with any kind of strategy on his part. Lee bitterly opposed this plan of Beauregard's, hence it was that Beauregard manifested an unwillingness to reinforce Lee when he reached the lines around Richmond.

The rifle pits of Lee's men spoke with flames and fire and with deadly effect upon the Federals. As some one has said, "So great was the precision of these practiced marksmen of Lee that no man or set of men could stand in front of those rifle pits and live."

Hancock attacked the Confederate right, in double column, with heavy supports in the rear. All this was one and the same to those veterans of Lee. A salient or front became Federal prey. A counter attack by Breckenridge drove the Federals back, while an enfilading fire of the Confederate artillery laid three thousand men of Hancock's on the field. A similar defeat met the attacking Federal corps on Lee's center and left. Practically the front lines of Grant's attacking column were almost literally destroyed in ten minutes. One's blood runs cold often to think of the useless sacrifice of human life on the altar of one man's stupidity.

A continuation of this slaughter was attempted when, at nine o'clock, Meade sent Grant's order to his subordinates to renew the attack. Hancock resolutely refused to give this order (official). W. F. Smith, commanding the Eighteenth Army corps, wrote this sentence: "That order I refuse to obey." General McMahon, Chief of Staff, Sixth Federal Army corps, has this to say (official):

The second and third command to attack came from Grant. "The order," says McMahon, "came to the corps commanders, and to the brigades and to the regiments without comment. To move that army further, except by regular approaches was simply an absolute impossibility—known to be such by every officer and man of the three corps engaged. The order was obeyed by a desultary fire from the men as they lay in position on the ground."

Heavy fighting took place on June 2d near Bethesda church and other points while the armies were coming into position for the grand assault. This was but the forerunner of the great battle of Cold Harbor. Lee saw this and was ready on the morning of June 3d. Grant threw his whole army in one maddened effort against Lee's front all along the line. The conflict was the bloodiest grapple in modern times. Discarding all strategy or manouvering, the mass of disorganized men fell upon the Confederate line with brute force. The engagement did not last half an hour, and in that time the Federal loss was thirteen thousand men—literally food for Confederate cannon. General Lee, when the Federals were driven back, sent a messenger to General A. P. Hill, asking the result on that part of the line. Hill took this officer to the front and pointed to the gruesome sight of the dead bodies lying actually upon the top of each other in piles. "Tell General Lee it is the same all along the whole line."

Some one has said, "The Federal Army had indeed sustained a blow so heavy that even the constant mind and fixed resolution of Grant had been shaken. He felt that he was up against it with Lee, even though his army at this time, with the addition of Butler, was four to one." There was no way to escape this responsibility of a sudden collapse, if relief had not come from another source, and that was further success

in the west, under Sherman. This reanimated the northern mind to some extent and gave Grant time to breathe. But for encouragement from this source there would have been no more recruits for the Army of the Potomac.

"So gloomy," says Mr. Swinton, a Northern historian, "was the military outlook after the action on the Chickahominy, and to such a degree had the moral spring of the public mind become relaxed, that there was at this time a great danger of the collapse of the war."

The history of this conflict, truthfully written, will show this. The archives of the State Department, when one day made public, will show how deeply the Government was affected by the want of military success and to what resolutions the Executive had in consequence come. Had not success elsewhere come to brighten the horizon, it would have been difficult to have raised new forces to recruit the Army of the Potomac, which was shaken in its structure, its valor quenched in blood and thousands of its ablest officers killed and wounded.

The campaign of one month, from May 4th to June 4th, had cost the Federal Commander sixty thousand men and three thousand officers—numbers which are given on the authority of Federal historians—while Lee's loss did not exceed eighteen thousand.

The result would seem an unfavorable comment upon the choice of routes to the James from Culpeper, which General Grant adopted, instead of by water up the James and York rivers. Two years before General McClellan had reached Cold Harbor with trifling losses, and that too at a time when General Lee's Army was in a condition to have effected a very much heavier blow than it did on Grant's Army (two years later). To attain the same point Grant had given a frightful toll of life, nor could it be said that he had achieved

a single important success to offset this fearful loss. He had not defeated his adversary in any of the battle fields of the campaign, nor did it seem that he had inflicted on him even a serious blow.

A review of the whole campaign condenses the entire movement. The Army of Northern Virginia got no reinforcements till it reached Hanover Junction, and then by Breckenridge and Pickett's nine thousand. Lee had held his lines against forces largely his superior in numbers and had inflicted upon his enemy at the close of this month's campaign at Cold Harbor alone the loss of some thirteen thousand men in thirty or forty minutes.

The movement of Grant across Virginia is now conceded by his admirers as very unfortunate. He failed to accomplish his expected end. The environment of Richmond could have been attained, as stated, without the loss of a man, and yet the lives of sixty-three thousand were given for the accomplishment of the same end!

The unparalleled loss of life sustained by one month's campaign from Spotsylvania to Cold Harbor by the Federal Army from May 4th to June 4th, 1864, made it impossible for another soldier to be raised for the Army of the Potomac and plunged the nation into such dispair that a collapse of the Government was only saved by signal successes of the Western Army, under Sherman, as before stated. This closes the Wilderness Campaign.

The accompanying poem is a fitting appendage to this Battle of the Wilderness—on the same day of the occurrance of this act of John Nicholls of Spartanburg. General Sedgwick was killed by a sharp-shooter one and one-half miles northwest of Spotsylvania Courthouse near Sunlight. A handsome stone marks the place where he fell.

JOHN NICHOLLS, OF SPARTANBURG, S. C.

(The author of this poem is John Jerome Rooney and the lines were first published in the *Seventh New York Regiment Gazette*. Sheriff Nicholls served as a private in Company H, First South Carolina volunteers, and the incident related occurred at Spotsylvania Court House May 12th, 1864.) See pages 17, 18, 19.

You told your tale how your brave boys fought
In the days of '63;
How they carried "Old Glory" through field and flood
From the mountains to the sea.
And as long as the heart will beat with pride,
When our country's song is sung,
And deeds of our lads in the bonny blue
Shall ring upon the minstrel's tongue.

But I'll tell you a tale that will make you think—
As sure as Gospel facts—
That the Northland hadn't the only call
Of clean white manly acts.
You know how Grant had massed our men,
In the spring of sixty-four;
And how, near Spotsylvania town,
He pushed us to the Ice.

We tried that day in wild pierce charge
To carry the rebels' works,
But they held their ground with stubborn grip
Of the death-inviting Turks.
The deadly hail came tearing out
Of their forward rifle pits,
And the "Yank", who tried to get fresh air
Would take it in cut-up bits.

Well, I need'nt tell you we pumped it back,
In a steady stream of lead,
And woe betide the topmost tip
Of a "Johnny rebel's" head;
Well, what do you think? No, you'll never guess,
If you guess the whole year through—
When our muskets were cracking like kindling wood
And the air was red and blue.

Out of the nearest rifle pit,
Where they lay securely walled,
As sure as you live, before our guns,
A "Johnny rebel" crawled.
To say we couldn't believe our eyes.
Is to draw it not too fine—
But sure enough he was creeping along,
Straight to our blazing line.

What's that you asked—did we stop to look?
Well, you should have seen the way
We shot the stream of molten fire
At that mad, dim patch of gray.
Why, you'd have thought an ant could not live out there,
Where that seething torrent fell;
And you'd say that a passing butter-fly
Would singe in that living hell.

But there he was a-crawling down,
Full length on the crimson grass—
The turf would jump where our bullets struck,
And the blue smoke rise and pass.
But still, with a death-defying luck,
That "Johnny rebel" came,
With never a halt or turn aside,
From that bath of lead and flame.

He'd got some fifteen feet away
From the mouth of his rifle pit,
(If ever the law of chance held good
He'd never get back to it.)
When he reached the little sumac bush,
That grew in the open field
(It wasn't leafy enough for a screen,
Nor thick enough for a shield).

And he half stretched up and broke a twig
Heighho, how the bullets flew!
He needn't have snapped it off, we thought—
Our lead would have cut it in two.
Then he turned a hand to his old canteen;
He fixed it fast to the stick,
And forward he leaned on the bloody grass,
With a motion sharp and quick.

When up from the sod a soldier raised—
His last great fight was fought—
And he saw—great God!—our captain quaff
The water the "Johnny" brought!
We saw the light of mighty joy
Come over his dying face,
And we thought we saw, through the drifting smoke,
The North and South embrace.

Jim Brown, he never was known to melt,
Looked down at his riddled coat,
Then, turning, walked half-shamed away—
For his eyes were all afloat!
Ah, boys, we were weaker than babies then,
And our thanks rose deep and slow,
To the Mighty One who had turned our shot
From the breast of our dearest foe.

And many a deed I have seen in war,
That the books have spelled out large,
But never a sweeter act I'll see,
Till I take my last discharge!
Yes, we asked his name when the fight was done,
As a miner looked for gold,
And over the Yankee lines that night
The story was told and told.

We blazed his deed in our inmost hearts,
And not 'till their doors are burst,
Shall vanish John Nichols of Spartanburg,
Of the South Carolina First.

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